***The Bell Jar* Test Review**

**Explain and give the significance of the following;**

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| New York City  The Rosenbergs  Crab meat  Amazon  Ladies Day Magazine  Diamond Pin  Shock Therapy  Institutions: Wymark, Caplan, and Belsize  Mirrors/reflection  Bell jar  Blood  The fig tree  The “beating heart” (think “I am, I am, I am” and Esther’s body’s determination to live) | Esther Greenwood  Buddy Willard  Mrs. Greenwood  Dr. Gordon  Dr. Nolan  Joan  Doreen  Jay Cee  Constantin  Marco  Irwin  Philomena Guinea  Lenny  Mrs. Willard  *Elaine* |

**Themes – Be able to explain using specific examples from TBJ**

Rebirth through suffering

Restricted role of 1950s women/societal pressure

Journey of self-discovery/coming of age/transformation

Identity

Role/relationship of men and women

Confinement

Madness (mind vs body)

Purity vs impurity

1. What factors, components, and stages of Esther Greenwood's descent into depression and madness are specified? How inevitable is that descent?
2. To what does the title of *The Bell Jar* refer?
3. What terms does Esther use to describe herself? How does she compare or contrast herself with Doreen and others in New York City, or with Joan and other patients in the hospital?
4. What instances and images of distortion occur in the novel? What are their contexts and significance? Does Esther achieve a clear, undistorted view of herself?
5. Take a look at the female characters in the novel. Which ones are traditional? Which are unconventional? What distinguishes the traditional characters from the unconventional ones?
6. Consider the male characters in the novel. How do they treat the female characters? What is their attitude toward women?
7. How does Esther’s attitude toward men change over the course of the novel? What role does this attitude play in her breakdown and recovery? Are Esther's attitudes toward men, sex, and marriage peculiar to herself? What are we told about her society's expectations regarding men and women, sexuality, and relationships? How have those expectations changed since that time (or have they?)?
8. Esther more than once admits to feelings of inadequacy. Is Esther's sense of her own inadequacies consistent with reality? Against what standards does she judge herself?
9. With what specific setting, event, and person is Esther's first thought of suicide associated? Why? In what circumstances do subsequent thoughts and plans concerning suicide occur?8. In addition to Deer Island Prison, what other images and conditions of physical and emotional imprisonment, enclosure, confinement, and punishment are presented?9. What are the primary relationships in Esther's life? Is she consistent in her behavior and attitudes within these relationships?
10. What role does Esther’s memory of her father play in the story? What role does Esther’s perception and description of her mother play in the story?
11. What are some alternative mother figures for Esther in the novel? How are they similar to or different from her mother?
12. What is Esther's attitude toward family – does she want children of her own? Why or why not?
13. How does Esther feel about sex? Why is she so intent on losing her virginity? How do her views on love and romance factor into her thoughts on sexuality, if at all? How does violence factor into some of the sexual encounters in the book and consider if violence is almost an inevitable consequence of sexual relationships between men and women in a society where women are considered inferior to men?
14. Consider recurring images in the novel, such as the bell jar, and the fig tree and describe how its meaning evolves throughout the novel.

**You will also be given a selection of quotes from the novel (and your seminars). You should be prepared to explain:**

1. the context of the passage
2. the significance of the passage to theme and/or character development
3. the effectiveness of the passage’s language (imagery, tone, etc.)